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His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury's Letter to the Right Reverend the Lords Bishops of his Province.

To the Reverend the Lord Bishop of Winchester.

Reverend Brother,



Y Writing to You, and the rest of our Brethren at this time, is occasion'd by a sensible growth of Vice and Prophaneness in the Nation: which, to the great Affliction of all good men, appears not only in the corrupt practices of particular persons; but also in the Endeavours that are used to subvert the *general* Principles of our holy Religion. And this with a boldness and openness, far beyond the examples of past times; so that if a speedy stop be not put to such *National* Provocations, we have just cause to fear they may bring down the heaviest Judgments of GOD upon Us; The preventing whereof belongs more immediately to us, who are the *Ministers of Christ*; and as such, are obliged to the utmost care and watchfulness in opposing these *Instruments of Satan*.

I doubt not, but many of the *Parochial* Clergy are sufficiently sensible both of their own duty and the danger we are in: In the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and other places, I am sure the good effects of their

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diligence have been very evident of late Years. But in some Parts that are more remote, all of them may not so well understand either the *Arts* or the *Industry* of these Enemies of Religion: And therefore I thought it a Duty incumbent on the Station wherein Providence has placed me, to desire of You, and the rest of our Brethren, to warn the Clergy under your Care, of these attempts against Religion and Virtue; and to excite them to a Diligence proportionable to the Danger; and to suggest to them such Methods as are most likely to work a *General Reformation*.

With this request, I send You such Particulars as, in my Opinion, are very necessary to be pressed upon your Clergy for the attaining so desirable an End. As,

I. That in their own Lives, and the Government of their own Families, they would make themselves *Examples* of a sober and regular Conversation. It is the Apostles Reasoning, *If a Man know not how to rule his own house (and much more his own Life and Actions); how shall he take care of the Church of God?* The true method of working a Reformation abroad, is to lay the foundation at home; which alone can give our *Reproofs* a just Weight and Authority: but till that is done, no *Exhortations*, whether in publick or private, can either be offer'd with decency, or receiv'd with reverence.

II. To Piety, they should add *Prudence* in all their Actions and Behaviour: which even in *Private Christians* is a great Ornament to Religion; but in *Publick Teachers* is a most necessary qualification for the due discharge of their

their Ministry. A *Mildness* of temper, with a *Gravity* and *Calmness* in their Conversation, will not fail to gain them a general Love and Esteem among their Neighbours: and a discreet Caution in their *Words* and *Actions*, will preserve them from those little Imprudences that are sometimes so sensible an Obstruction to the good Endeavours of well-meaning Men. Persons in *Holy Orders* are not only bound, in the conduct of their Lives, to consider what is lawful or unlawful *in it self*, but also what is decent or indecent *in Them*, with respect to their *Character* and *Function*: *Abstaining from all appearance of evil; and giving no Offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.*

III. While Our *Enemies* are so very industrious in seeking out Objections against the Christian Religion; it becomes the *Clergy* (who are set apart for the Vindication of it) to be no less diligent in their Preparations for its Defence: By acquainting themselves thorowly with the rational grounds of Christianity, and the true state of such Points as are the Subjects of our present Controversies; together with the Objections which are usually made by our Adversaries of all sorts, and the Effectual Answers that have been returned to them by so many Eminent Writers of our own Church: That so they may be ready, on all occasions, to do justice and honour to our Religion; and be able to expose the folly and ignorance of these Gain-saying Men. The Cause which God has put into our hands, is undoubtedly good; but the best cause may suffer by the weakness of its Advocate: and when this happens in the matter of Religion, it gives the Adversary an occa-

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sion of Triumph, and is apt to stagger the faith even of sincere and uprejudic'd Christians.

IV. It were to be wisht, that the Clergy of every Neighbourhood, would agree upon frequent *Meetings*, to consult for the good of Religion in general, and to advise with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular Cures. By what Methods any Evil Custom may most easily be broken ; How a sinner may be most effectually reclaimed ; and (in general) How each of them in their several circumstances may contribute most to the advancement of Religion. Such *Consultations* as these, besides the mutual benefit of advice and instruction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of some, to reduce the over-eagerness of others to a due temper, and to provoke All to a Religious Emulation in the improvement of *Piety* and *Order* within their respective Parishes. And These *Meetings* might still be made a greater advantage to the Clergy in carrying on the *Reformation* of Mens *Lives* and *Manners*, by inviting the *Church-Wardens* of their several Parishes, and other pious persons among the *Laity*, to joyn with them in the Execution of the most probable methods that can be suggested for those good Ends. And we may very reasonably expect the happy Effects of such a concurrence, from the Visible Success of that Noble Zeal wherewith so many about the great *Cities*, in my Neighbourhood, do promote true *Piety*, and a *Reformation of Manners*. And therefore I desire you that you will particularly excite your Clergy to the procuring such assistances as these, for the more effectual discharge of their own duty.

V. It

V. It would very much further and facilitate all their Endeavours of this kind, to gain over the persons who have the greatest *Esteem* and *Authority* in their Parishes, to a hearty concern for the honour of God and Religion: frequently suggesting to them the Obligation that God has laid upon them to be *Examples* to others; and the great good that it is in their power to do, by setting a Pattern of *regular* living, and the unspeakable mischief of their *irregular* behaviour. For if once the better Sort can be brought to such a Seriousness and Sobriety, the rest will more easily follow; *Example* being the most powerful Instruction; and Experience teaching us that *shame* and *fear*, which arise from the *Authority* of such good Patterns are commonly the most effectual restraints upon the meaner sort.

VI. Where any Person is obstinate in his Vices, and not to be reclaimed either by *Teaching* or *Example*, by *Exhortation* or *Reproof*; the *Ordinary* ought to be informed of it, that he may proceed to reclaim such by *Ecclesiastical Censures*: and where those are like to prove ineffectual, the *Civil Magistrate* must be applied to, and desired to proceed against them according to the Laws in those Cases provided, Which *Information* and *Request*, especially in the Case of such incorrigible Offenders, can be made by none so properly as by the *Clergy*; who may best be supposed to understand the necessity there is of having recourse to the Civil Magistrate. And since our *Law-givers* have Enacted these temporal Punishments, on purpose to assist us in the discharge of our Ministry; it would be a great failing in us,

us, not to make use of them when all other Methods have been tried to little or no Effect.

VII. Every Pious Person of the Laity, should, if need be, be put in mind by the Clergy, that he ought to think himself obliged to use his best endeavours to have such Offenders punished by the *Civil Magistrate*, as can no otherwise be amended. And that when he hears his Neighbour swear or blaspheme the Name of God, or sees him offend in drunkenness or prophanation of the Lords Day, he ought not to neglect to give the Magistrate Notice of it : In such a Case to be called an *Informer*, will be so far from making any Man Odious in the Judgment of Sober Persons, that it will tend to his honour, when he makes it appear by his unblameable behaviour, and the care he takes of *Himself* and his own *Family* that he doth it purely for the glory of God, and the good of his Brethren. Such well disposed persons as are resolved upon this, should be encouraged to meet as oft as they can, and to consult how they may most discreetly and affectually manage It in the places where they live.

VIII. As in reforming the *Laity*, they ought to use the Assistance of the *Civil Magistrate* ; so if any of their own *Brethren* be an irregular Liver, and cannot be reclaimed by brotherly Admonition, the *neighbouring Clergy* should be strictly enjoined to make it known to their *Diæcesan*, either by themselves or the *Archdeacon*, or by some other convenient way. That so the Offender may be Admonisht to live suitably to his Character ; and if a bare Admonition will not do, he may be proceeded against by *Ecclesiastical*

stical Censures ; for the Preventing such *Scandals* and *Mischiefs*, as will always accompany the irregular Life of a *Minister of the Gospel*.

IX. And whereas the Foundations of *Piety* and *Morality* are best laid at the beginning, in the Religious Education of *Children* ; I cannot but wish that every one of the *Parochial Clergy* would be very diligent in *Catechising* the Children under their Care ; and not only so, but in calling upon them afterwards, as they grow up, to give such further Accounts of their Religion, as may be expected from a riper Age. That being thus carefully instructed in the *Faith* and *Duty* of a Christian, they also may teach their Children the same ; and so *Piety*, *Virtue*, and *Goodness* may for ever flourish in our Church and Nation.

These Directions with such others of the same nature as will occur to you, I desire may be Transmitted by you to the Clergy of your Diocese ; for the Religious Government of themselves, and their People, in these dangerous Times. So commending you and them to the Blessing of God, I rest

Lambeth. April
4th. 1699.

Your Affectionate Brother

Tho. Cantuar.

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